

ANNUAL REPORT 1963

The membership of the Society is at present about 290. The General Committee numbers 24, including officers. During the year it met 10 times, average attendance 14.

The Executive Committee for the year consisted of the officers and Mr. Coventry, Mr. Curl and Mr. Eccleston.

In May Mr. R.A. Finch begged the Committee to accept his resignation as Hon. Secretary, after three years of imaginative and industrious service. The Committee accepted his resignation with much sympathy and regret. The appointment of Mr. Maurice Johnstone to succeed him is subject to confirmation at the Annual General Meeting.

Some of the matters which have exercised the Committees during the past year have been:-

1. The proposal to convert a track on East Common into a metalled road in order to provide access to the new development site in the Coleswood area. As a matter of principle, the Society expressed its anxiety to the Urban District Council and sent a formal letter of protest to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. The Hertfordshire Society and the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society, to both of which we are affiliated, also registered protests. The Minister has ordered an Enquiry, which will take place in Harpenden on 10th March.

2. The Society supported the Council's objection to the proposal to build a seven-storey block of flats at the junction of Walkers Road and St. Johns Road, and was represented at the appeal enquiry, the result of which is not yet known. ✓

3. The Street Improvement Project. As a practical alternative to the comprehensive scheme which had originally been considered, the Society suggested to the Council that they might consider engaging a consultant architect whose advice would be available to the Chamber of Trade and shopkeepers on painting, decorating, shopfronts and signs. This suggestion is being actively pursued by the Council and the Chamber of Trade.

4. Illegal car-parking on the Common. The Committee considered a suggestion that the Society might provide voluntary wardens to assist the Council to restrict encroachments, but decided that it did not seem to be a viable proposition.

5. Luton Airport. The possibility of the Airport being developed to take jet traffic, with a probable severe increase in aerial noise, prompted the Committee to offer to the Clerk of the Council the Society's full support to any resistance movement. But, mercifully, no North-South runway, which would affect Harpenden, is envisaged at present. ✓

At the Autumn Meeting, which was well attended, Mr. Michael Dower of the Civic Trust gave a prophetic and entertaining description of The Face of Britain in A.D. 2000, with slides cunningly chosen to show current developments at their worst (U.S.A.) and best (G.B.) and Mr. Eccleston explained the implications of the County Development Plan as it may affect Harpenden.

Subscriptions for 1964 were due on 1st January and may be sent to the Hon. Treasurer at 5, The Uplands, Harpenden, or left in the enclosed envelope in the box which Kingston House Stores kindly allow us to keep at their cash desk. The minimum subscription is at present 2/6d, but you will appreciate that this sum barely covers the cost of postage and stationery, and the Hon. Treasurer is always pleased to receive a larger donation.

"According to our records", more than 10% of the members are more than one year in arrears. Does this mean you?

— Maurice Johnstone, Hon. Sec.

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY

President: Capt. K.Hills-Bond, M.C.

Telephone:
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Harpenden.

Dear Member,

Annual Outing

A visit to Blenheim Palace, Oxford, has been arranged for Members and Friends of the Society for Saturday, 25th May, 1963.

The neighbouring Forest of Woodstock has for centuries been famous for its Hunting Lodge of Kings.

The Manor House decayed until 1704 when a grateful nation built for England's greatest man, England's greatest mansion which was conferred on John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough and his heirs for ever.

The foundation stone was laid in 1705, - Sir Christopher Wren's design, for some reason, - being passed over in favour of that of Sir John Vanburgh.

In 1712 the Duchess of Marlborough, a somewhat difficult woman, to put it mildly, quarrelled with her bosom friend, Queen Anne, with the result that the grants for the further building of the Palace ceased until King George 1st came to the throne.

The grounds, considered to be the finest example of landscape gardening in Europe, was laid out by "Capability Brown".

Vanburgh's Palace has been, and will always be much criticised by modern authorities, who regard it as among the "monsters of construction", "colossal", "charmless", and "graceless" but, perhaps because of its size, few will deny its magnificence.

England's greatest son of a later date, Sir Winston Churchill, first saw the light in this vast mansion.

The coach will leave Harpenden (opposite Mary Ellen's Cafe) at 1 p.m. and will arrive at Blenheim at 3.30 p.m. After an hour spent in a guided tour of the Palace, tea will be served at 4.45 p.m.

Outward Journey: Hemel Hempstead, Tring, Aylesbury, Thame, Wheatley, Woodstock, Blenheim.

Return: Bicester, Buckingham, Fenny Stratford, Dunstable, Redbourn.

Seats, inclusive of entrance fee, tea, etc. - 16/6d each.

Yours sincerely,

Colin W. Curl.
Chairman.

tear off